

# DEEP SEA ADVENTURE

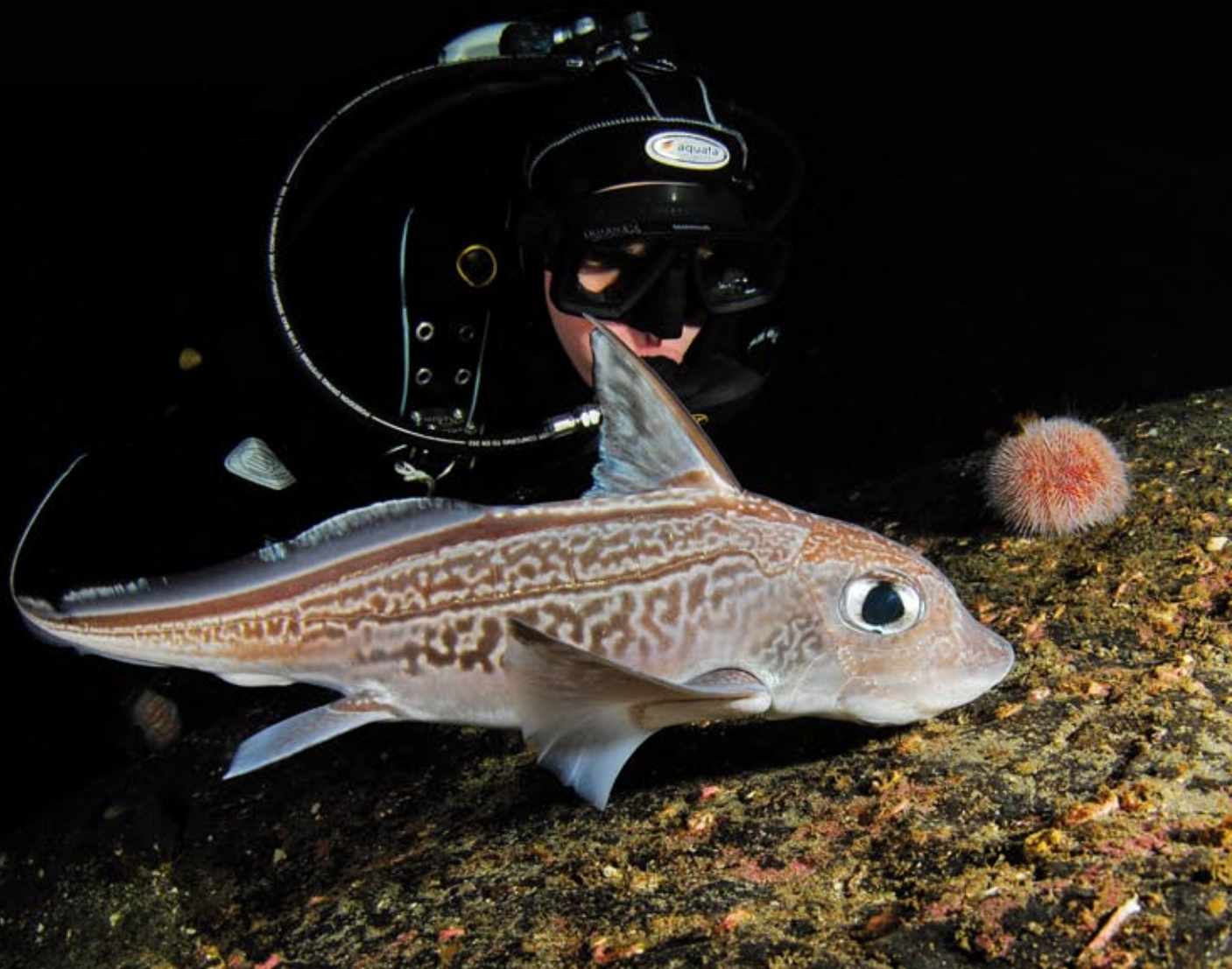
text & photo: Sven Gust

It is the largest habitat on our planet and although if probably all of us have been very close to it, so far, only a few people have really seen it first hand. We cross the oceans with ships, but know very little about the unattainable depths below.

However, at very few places in the world divers can take a look at some of the strange deep sea creatures and meet them up close. The Trondheim fjord and the Namsfjord in mid- Norway two of these few places on our planet.

NORTHERN EXPLORERS started many years ago to explore these two fjords underwater. Gradually we discovered and explored different dive sites, at which divers can see at least a good dozen species which normally live at depths far beyond what divers can reach.

Virtually all of these deep-sea species can be found in depths of 30 meters here, or even much shallower. And, as a scuba diver, perhaps nowhere else you can get such a fascinating insight into this amazing habitat and its equally impressive inhabitants.





In the summer months it is never getting dark so far north. But many deep-sea fishes only migrate at night into shallow waters. Therefore the autumn is the best time for this expedition. Now, the water temperatures are moderate and are sometimes still above 10 ° C. Also the visibility is usually quite stable with at least 8 to 10 meters and up to 30 meters. But there is something special with the Namsfjord and Trondheim fjord: usually there is a freshwater layer from the surrounding streams on the surface. Since the bog water in this region is reddish brown, a one to three meter deep layer of freshwater causes a very low light penetration, even in bright sunlight. It may be one of the essential factors which ensure that so many deep sea creatures feel comfortable that close to the water surface.





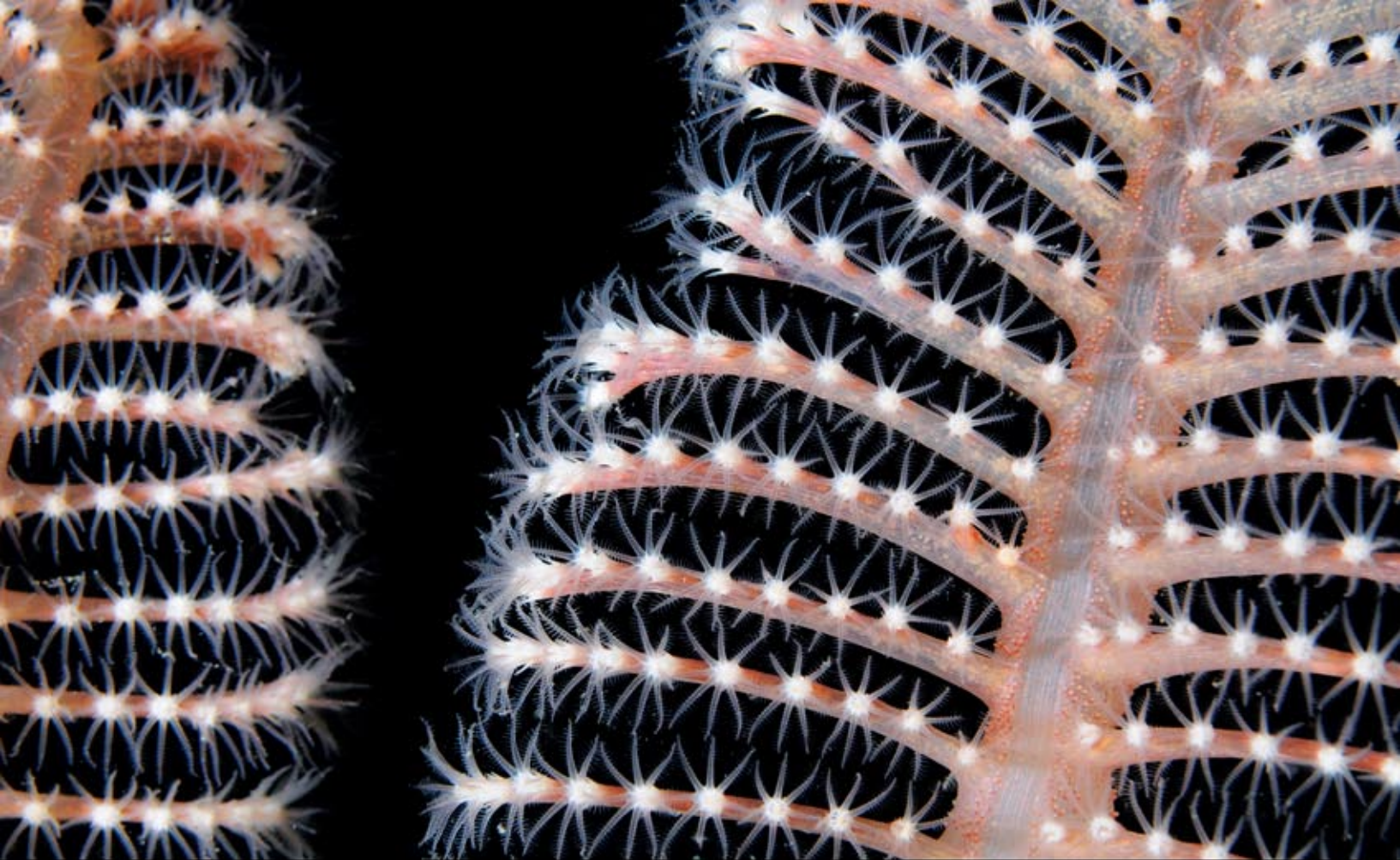
In addition to the deep-sea habitats we will also dive other great sites. For example wrecks and kelp forests.





Down into the depth: the Trondheim Fjord has the shallowest reefs of deep water corals worldwide. Just 25 to 40 meters below the surface, we see corals, which are otherwise only to be found at least 200 to 300 meters deep.





We start our tour at the Namsfjord after all participants have arrived by plane at Trondheim airport. The Namsfjord is about 40 kilometers long and well 470 meters deep at its deepest point. There are several sharks and rays. The mighty Greenland sharks end up in the nets of the fishermen, now and then. Likewise, the white skates lives here in depth, which are up to 150 cm long.

Smaller sharks are found in large numbers, such as the up to 60 cm long Velvet belly and the bit more than a meter long Blackmouth dogfish. These two types are also on our "wish list" as well as Thornback rays and the Atlantic hagfish, an eel-like relative of lampreys.





They act as the garbage removal of the deep sea and eat up carcasses that sink to the ocean floor in incredible speed.

Far more aesthetic, however, are the phosphorescent sea pens, a soft coral species which is to be found in some places in large numbers. Also anemones, nudibranchs and other sea creatures are pretty and colourful. Of course, not all species we discover on this expedition are pure deep sea species. We also explore wrecks, kelp forests and steep walls full of corals and anemones. The selection of different dive sites is great.

And when it gets dark this will not only increase the chances to observe deep sea fishes, there is also a good chance to see the fascinating northern lights when the sky is clear.



Arriving at the Trondheim fjord we dive in a narrow sound. Water is pressed out of the depths to the surface. This is the best place to find the deep sea jelly *Periphylla periphylla* in divable water depths. The dark red, or light blue jellyfish is called Crown jellyfish in Norway.

After dark, we prepare for another dive and get ready to meet the strangest fish ever. The Ghost shark has the scientific name *Chimaera monstrosa*, suggesting that also the Swedish researchers were amazed by this strange phenomenon when naming it in 1758.

The fish has typical characteristics of sharks and rays, very large eyes and sensitive sensory organs at the snout. They are harmless and confiding. When the divers approach them cautiously, the chimearas even swim directly towards the strange visitors from a another world, sometimes.

Usually we dive no deeper than 30 meters to encounter this fascinating fish. Often we can observe large gatherings of Ghost sharks. And always is also possible to see other deep-sea fish, crustaceans and cephalopods, which are usually not be found in water depths that divers can reach.

At other dive sites at this fjord we find deep water corals and huge areas completely covered with anemones. And on every dive you should expect the unexpected: to meet deep-sea species, which nearly no diver ever has seen.

Each dive is a very unique adventure. The Trondheim fjord is the largest fjord of Norway, and in its depths there are still many mysteries. By far not all of the strange creatures from the depths can also be observed in the shallow water. Nevertheless, it is probably the only known place in the world where divers he can get that close to the deep sea and its inhabitants!





